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SIPDIS

STATE FOR OES/ENV, WHA/CAN (RUNNING)

EPA FOR OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS (CHRISTICH)

INTERIOR FOR FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE (GLOMAN)

COMMERCE FOR 4320/MAC/WH/ON/OIA/BENDER

STATE PLEASE PASS ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: Invasive Species: IJC speaks to Parliamentary Committee

Summary

1. The American Co-Chair of the International Joint Commission (IJC) sought the support of members of the House of Commons Fisheries and Oceans committee for a joint US-GoC reference to the IJC on the Great Lakes invasive species problem. First impressions are that the committee is pre-occupied with other matters and will not be the Commons committee to push the GoC toward endorsing a joint reference. End summary.

2. Dennis Schornack, Chair of the U.S. Section of the IJC briefed members of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans on February 11th concerning Alien Invasive Species. Schornack's comments are provided in full (as well as statements by Canadian Section Chair Herb Gray and Canadian Commissioner Robert Gourd) at the following IJC web address:

<http://www.ijc.org/ijcweb-e.html>

3. The bottom-line message from Schornack to the members of the committee was: invasive species are the number one threat to the economic and biological integrity of the Great Lakes and the IJC continues to call for a reference from the two governments to coordinate and harmonize bi-national efforts to stop this threat. (Such a reference was first recommended in September 2002 in the IJC's 11th Biennial Report on Great Lakes Water Quality.)

4 With respect to the most up-to-date assessment of what action needs to be taken to confront this challenge, Mr. Schornack noted the recent report published by the International Association for Great Lakes Research (IAGLR). It's called "Research and Management Priorities for Aquatic Invasive Species in the Great Lakes" and is available at: <http://www.iaglr.org/scipolicy/ais/>

5. This was only the second set of hearings by this committee on the issue. The first hearing, on February 6th, featured Chris Goddard, Executive Secretary of the Great Lakes Fisheries Commission. At the end of February, the Committee expects to hear from representatives of the Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Transport Canada and Environment Canada. According to the Clerk of the committee, given other priorities, the earliest date for the Committee to issue a report on invasive species will be the end of April.

Impact of IJC presentation

6. In Emboff's opinion, there was no evidence that the IJC's presentation will elicit a strong effort from this committee or lead to GoC support for a reference to the IJC. There are those on the committee who feel this is a significant issue demanding immediate government focus, but it is not clear this particular committee will take the lead in pressing the GoC for action on invasive species.

7. The government has had an "action plan" on invasive species since 1995 (put in place in response to the Convention on Biological Diversity) that names the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Environment Canada and Transport Canada as the responsible agencies. The problem, however, according to the Commissioner of Environment and Sustainable Development (part of the GoC Auditor General's organization), is that none of these departments is willing to take a leading role to ensure that the action plan results in concrete actions. Likewise, many members of the Fisheries and Oceans Committee believe that another committee, perhaps Environment, should take the lead on this

issue.

18. There was one suggestion, however, which we expect to appear in the Committee's final report. The Canadian Chair, Herb Gray, made the eminently sensible recommendation that one cabinet Minister should be named as the lead Minister on Invasive Species and have the power of the Prime Minister behind him or her to move departments forward in a coordinated fashion. This might energize GoC action on Invasive species - and reduce the impetus for a reference to the IJC.

19. Comment: Although the IJC presentation to the Committee may not be critical in the GoC's decision process, it does fit with the generally greater emphasis this issue is getting in Ottawa. We continue to receive "feelers" from DFAIT about their interest in consulting with Washington on IJC's proposal for a joint reference, as well as addressing the broader issue of dealing with alien invasive species in the "North American" context. End comment.

Cellucci